

Welcome to the printable, PDF edition of *Bantha Tracks Online*! *Bantha Tracks*, the Newsletter of Hyperspace: The Official *Star Wars* Fan Club, is now easy to share with your friends and family, and to save in your collection.

The Friends of Our Life, Part II



In *Bantha Tracks Online* Issue #90, we celebrated the *Star Wars* Fan Community of the last 10 years, a community that largely took root in 1999 with the opening of *The Phantom Menace*, and expanded to a tightly-knit worldwide phenomenon. We celebrated those fan connections, particularly the selfless gift of Barry Benecke, who donated a kidney to fellow fan Josh Weisleberg, whom he had not previously met in person. The operations for the two men occurred in early February, and I'm pleased to report both are recovering very well.

It would be hard to describe my surprise when, shortly after writing about Benecke and Weisleberg, I received an email telling about another kidney donation between *Star Wars* fan friends: donor Eric Seemann and recipient Jeff Romanoff. Both men are members of the 501st Legion, the *Star Wars* Imperial costuming group.

Seemann first heard of the 501st Legion in 2004 when he stopped to make a donation on the streets of New York City. Costumed *Star Wars* characters, from Romanoff's Garrison Carida and from the New York Garrison, were collecting money to help with chemotherapy for young Katie Johnson, the daughter of 501st founder Albin Johnson. *Star Wars* iconic costumes combined with charitable good works captured Seemann's attention, and by 2007 he had stormtrooper armor of his own and joined the ranks of the New York Garrison.

Later, in 2008, while appearing in costume at the Franklin Institute's exhibit, "*Star Wars: Where Science Meets Imagination*" in Philadelphia, Seemann heard that Romanoff, whom he had coincidentally met while donating in New York in 2004, was suffering from Von Hippel-Lindau disease. The rare condition led to kidney cancer. Romanoff had lost his right kidney to tumors, and the left was failing. Seemann decided to be tested to see if his kidney would be a match, and possibly a chance at life, for Romanoff. It turned out that Seemann's kidney was a match, and the surgery date was set.

It's reportedly not that uncommon for potential donors to be tested to see if they can give a kidney to members of their close family. It speaks to the incredibly tight bonds in the *Star Wars* community that these fans are willing to treat each other with the kind of closeness usually reserved for family members.

Surgery for both men was April 3, and both are reported to be recovering. Romanoff's new kidney will be unaffected by the past disease.

"The greatest thing was when the doctor came in and said that they had removed all of the visible cancer from Jeff," says Seemann. "I knew that I had made a difference that day."

Writes Romanoff, "Eric is a true hero and emulates everything *Star Wars* is about. A wonderful, selfless friend, putting his life on the line, so I may see my son grow up."

In addition to supporting both men with friendship and hospital visits, both in and out of costume, the members of the 501st Legion raised the money to pay for Seemann's travel to the Cleveland Clinic for the surgery.

"*Star Wars* has been a part of my life since I was 9 years old," concludes Romanoff. "I feel blessed that I can be a part of such a wonderful club like the 501st. It's given us the opportunity to touch so many lives. Over the last 10 years, I've visited countless children's hospitals with Carida. That's the reward."

Above: Jeff Romanoff and Eric Seemann, with members of the 501st Legion's Garrison Carida, at the Lehigh Valley Kidney Walk in Allentown, Pennsylvania. October, 2008. Photos submitted by Joe Milicia.

Above Right: Darth Vader (Mark Gau) visits Jeff Romanoff at the hospital shortly before his surgery. Photo courtesy of Cleveland Clinic.

This heartwarming story also appeared in *Bantha Tracks* #41 in *Star Wars Insider*.

And a reward that, thanks to selfless friends like Seemann and Benecke, Romanoff and Weisleberg can look forward to enjoying for years in the future. -- Mary Franklin, Editor, *Bantha Tracks*

Outlander Club

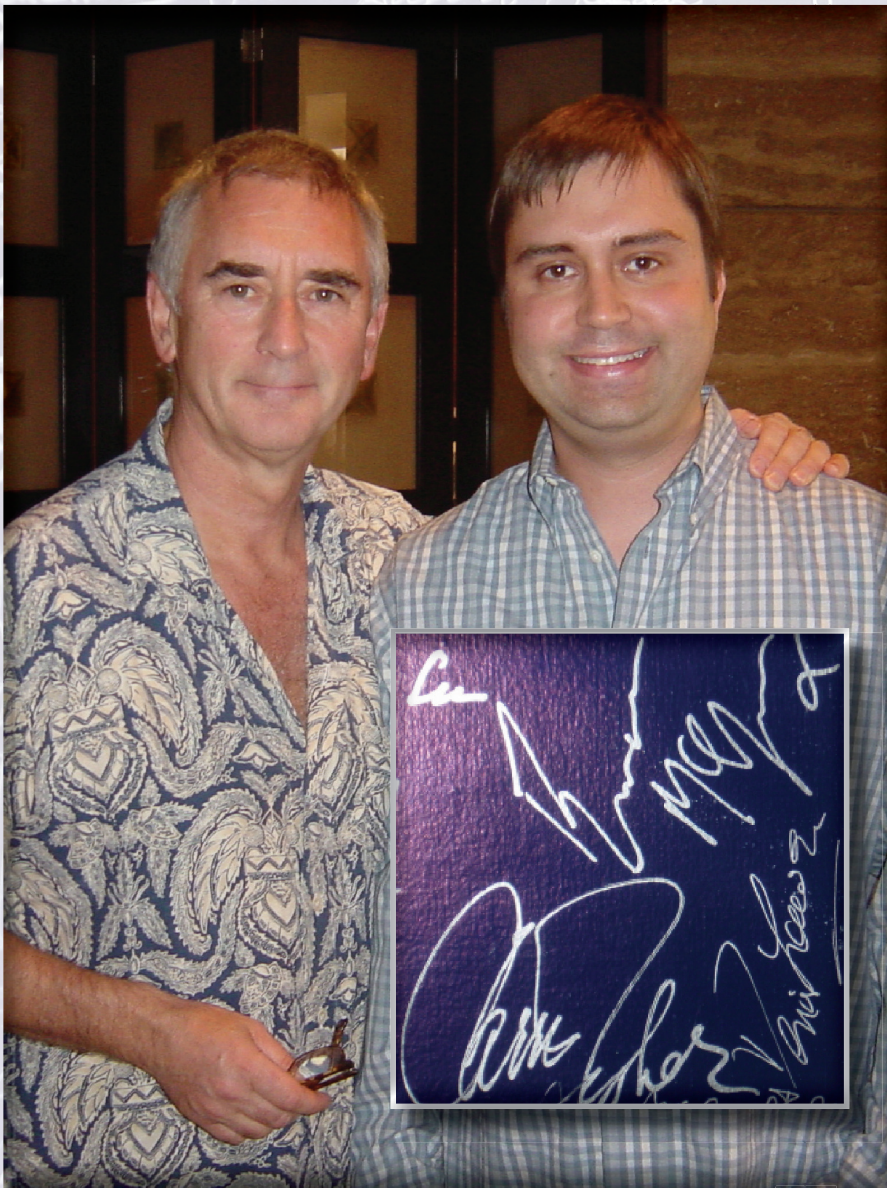
We're Fans, and We Mean It!

Bantha Tracks presents just a few of many examples that prove to us that the *Star Wars* fan community shines brightest in every possible way. From grand personal obsessions to unequalled acts of charity, *Star Wars* has the best fans in the galaxy.

Kevin LaNeave, of Los Angeles, California, has followed his *Star Wars* quest across the globe. Years ago, he started collecting autographs on his classic *A New Hope* poster, and through perseverance, good planning, and good manners he has collected more than

240 autographs from the cast and crew, including George Lucas, John Williams, and Harrison Ford.

We covered LaNeave's fantastic autographed poster in *Bantha Tracks* years ago, and it's time for an update. When we last interviewed LaNeave, he had a few signatures he still wanted for his poster, but one in particular, Denis Lawson (Wedge Antilles), seemed like it would be the holy grail. Lawson, who is the uncle of actor Ewan McGregor, is reported to be a very difficult autograph catch.



"I finally met Denis, after multiple attempts in London, in Los Angeles of all places," says LaNeave, who currently lives in L.A. Lawson was nominated for an Emmy award for Best Supporting Actor for the PBS production "Bleak House." The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) hosted a brunch at a posh Los Angeles hotel the day before the award show taping. LaNeave took a chance and went to the hotel to see if Lawson would attend.

"Sure enough, Denis had already arrived. I patiently waited for over an hour in the hotel lobby."

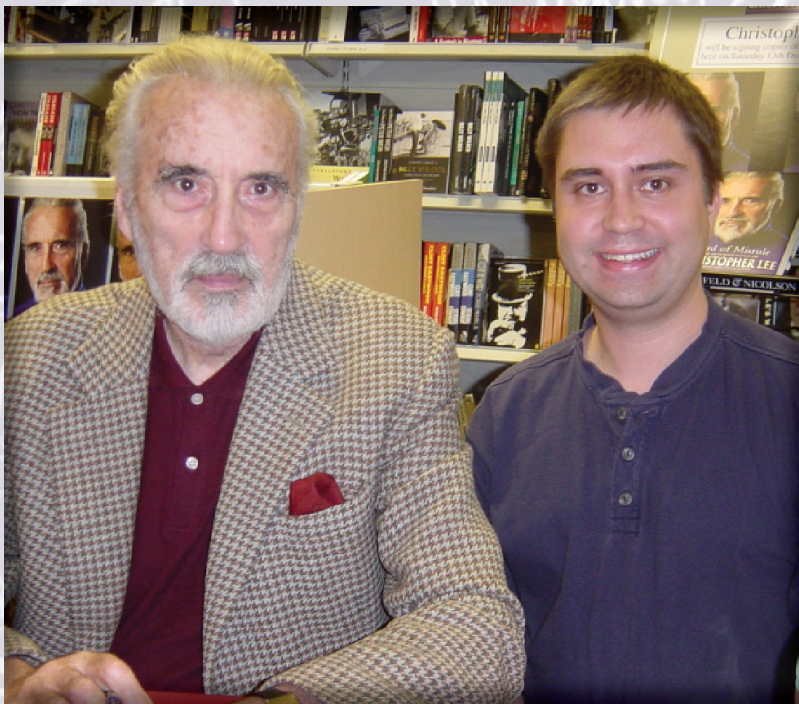
After making so many attempts in London with no result, LaNeave wondered if his luck would be any better in Los Angeles.

"When I finally spotted Denis he was leaving the outside courtyard area where the brunch was being held. I saw my moment fleeing," recalls LaNeave. "I confidently called out his name when he was heading towards the valet car area. He turned around. I approached him telling him who I was, and that I had been wanting to meet him for a long time so he could sign my special *Star Wars* film poster. I told him that I had been collecting signatures from the entire cast and crew of all six *Star Wars* movies on one poster for over ten years. The poster had over 200 signatures on it."

Lawson agreed, then quickly posed for a photo with LaNeave and departed.

LaNeave had saved a spot for Lawson's signature next to McGregor's, and to that of actress Carrie Fisher (Princess Leia).

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LaNeave had the opportunity to meet actor Christopher Lee (Count Dooku) several years after Lee first signed his poster.

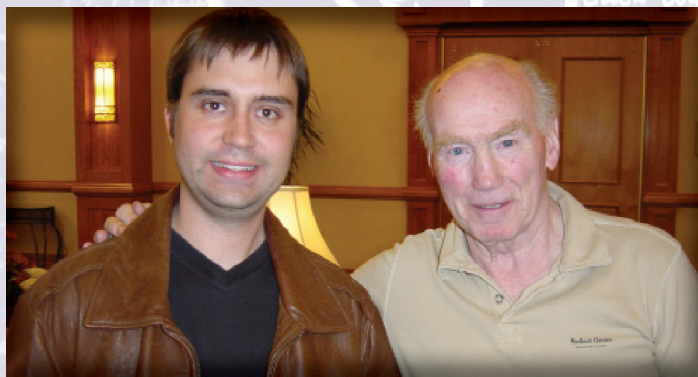
"Several years earlier, Mr. Lee surprised me by telephoning my home residence in L.A. in response to a written request I had sent to his agent explaining my poster," says LaNeave. "I was not able to meet Mr. Lee in person at that time, but I was able to leave the poster at the hotel for his signature."

Later, LaNeave saw an opportunity to meet Christopher Lee in person when he was promoting his newly-released autobiography at a Sci-Fi book store in England. Lee signed LaNeave's Lord of the Rings cast and crew poster.

"I was able to greet him in person and thank him for his kindness several years earlier in California," concludes LaNeave. "The *Star Wars* Saga is fortunate to have his presence in our beloved series."

The LaNeave Gallery

Every time he collects an autograph, LaNeave has his picture taken with the cast or crew member who signs. As a result, in addition to his incredible poster, he has a treasure of photographs with some of the most beloved names of the Saga. Here are just a few special snapshots from his collection:



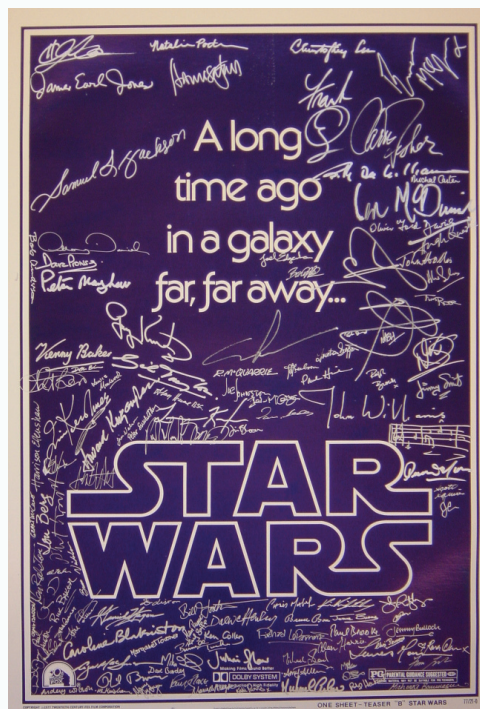
Top left: The legendary voice of Darth Vader, actor James Earl Jones; top right: Moff Jerjerrod in *Return of the Jedi*, Michael Pennington; bottom left: stunt arranger, coordinator and stuntman from the original trilogy, Peter Diamond; bottom right: Gary Kurtz, producer, *Star Wars* and *Empire*.



Top: Michael Sheard (Admiral Ozzel) from *The Empire Strikes Back*; middle: Visual effects art director, illustrator and designer for the original trilogy, Joe Johnston; bottom: Writer of the screenplays for *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, Lawrence Kasdan.

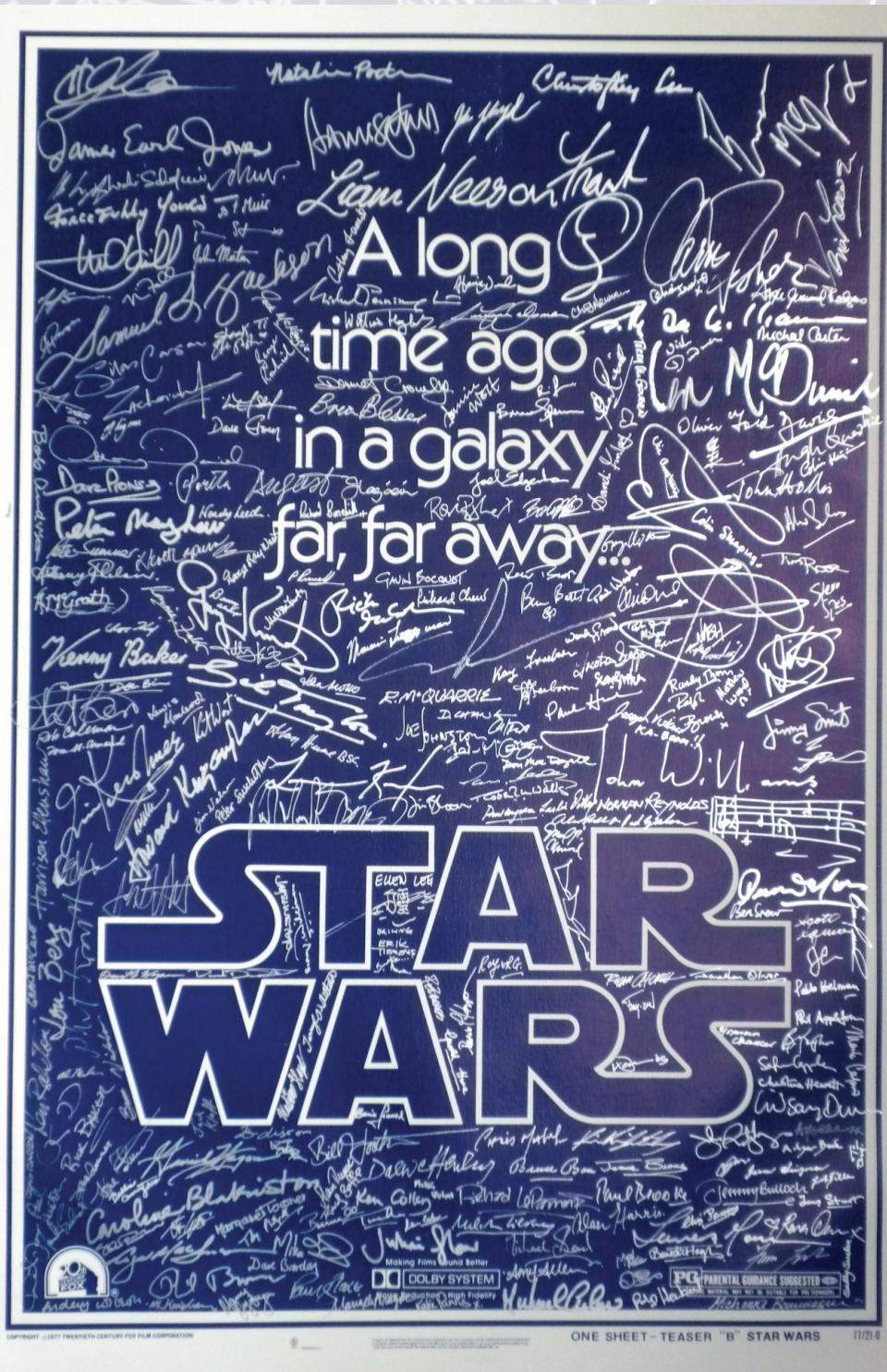


The evolution of a priceless obsession. LaNeave and actor Anthony Daniels (C-3PO), back when LaNeave had far fewer signatures on his poster. Although they were fewer in number, they represented a most impressive collection even back then, including George Lucas, Ian McDiarmid, Carrie Fisher, and *Star Wars* composer John Williams.



The poster as photographed in May of 2002.

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The poster, about as it is now. LaNeave says he has about 25 autographs that are on his "most desired" list to include on the poster, but adds "The real challenge would be to actually squeeze in 15 - 25 more signatures on the poster now, since there's hardly any room left. I may have to concede and let people start signing in the white border area."

So just who is left on LaNeave's list of "most wanted" these days?

"I'm still not quite finished with the cast and crew signatures on the entire *Star Wars* Saga poster," he writes. "I'm tickled that you would like me to elaborate a little more with who else is missing. Without these additions, I will not feel complete enough to frame it and hang it on the wall with fond memories."

Here are LaNeave's 25 most-desired signatures he is still seeking:

- Kathy Mullen, Yoda performing assistant; Ep. V, VI
- Brigitte Kahn, Ion Cannon controller; Ep. V
- Catherine Munroe, Zuckuss; Ep. V
- Deep Roy, Droopy McCool; Ep. VI
- Jane Busby, Chief Chirpa; Ep. VI
- Peter Serafinowicz, voice of Darth Maul; Ep. I
- David Tattersall, Director of Photography; Ep. I-III
- Wayne Pygram, Tarkin; Ep. III
- Axel Dench, Wookiee Chieftain; Ep. III
- Rohan Nichol, Captain Antilles, ROTS; Ep. III
- Hassani Shapi, Eeth Koth; Ep. I
- Roger Christian, Set Decorator; Ep. IV
- Ron Cobb, Cantina alien design; Ep. IV
- Duwayne Dunham, picture editor; Ep. VI
- Nilo Rodis-Jamero, art director/costume designer; Ep. V-VI
- David Fincher, ILM effects artist; Ep. VI
- Dhruv Chanchani, Kitster; Ep. I
- Robin Gurland, Casting Director; Ep. I-III
- Jack Thompson, Cliegg Lars; Ep. II
- Matt Doran, Elan Sleazebaggano; Ep. II
- Veronica Segura, Corde; Ep. II
- Genevieve O'Reilly, Mon Mothma; Ep. III
- David Bowers, Mas Amedda; Ep. II, III
- Dermot Power, Art Department; Ep. II
- Sang Jun Lee, Art Department; Ep. III



A Special Message for

Super Trooper Brian Rehka...



Brian Rehka worked on his costumes long before he knew the 501st even existed, and long before he became a member of Florida's Tampa Bay Squadron. His very favorite costume, Darth Vader, was a passion even when he was small.

"He has a full time job, a wife, and three teenagers but still manages to find time for his passion. His kids know the things he sacrifices for his family and adore and support him because of it. They even participate in some of the troops. He has been a *Star Wars* fan since the day the opening credits of *A New Hope* appeared on the big screen in 1977, he was just twelve years old."

Rehka remembers his first Vader costume ever, "My first Vader was around 1979. I was around 14 years old. It was one of those cheap, Halloween plastic face masks. Then I, and mostly Mom, took a plastic police helmet and added the rim around the bottom with cardboard and painted it. I wore a black turtle neck, black pants, and black gloves."

"Rehka spends countless hours in his garage perfecting his current Darth Vader costume, not to mention his stormtrooper, Tusken Raider, Royal Guard, and Boba Fett. He comes up for air occasionally though. He even has his very own movie room! Or should I say, *Star Wars* room. It's totally separate from his house and has a projector screen, movie theater seats, and even a bathroom!

"Of course, the best part is all the toys! He has a wide collection of *Star Wars* toys, figures, books, music, and movies. He has done more troops than anyone could ever keep track of. His resume includes movie premiers, Stars of Hope fundraisers, Veteran's Hospital troops, Children's Hospital troops, schools, parades, YMCA open houses, comic book conventions, *Star Wars* Weekends at Disney's Hollywood Studios, and even escorting someone out onto the Tampa Bay Ray's baseball field to throw the first pitch! Since his initial initiation, Rehka has been awarded Trooper of the Year two years in a row and nominated for the position of Commanding Officer.



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"The highlight of Rehka's 501st Legion career had to be when he got chosen out of thousands of applicants to march in the 2007 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. They only chose 200 out of the thousands of applicants they received. His dream had come true. Although he worked very hard on his costumes through blood, sweat, and tears for that very opportunity, he still could not believe he could ever be blessed with such an honor. 'I feel like Charlie who just got his golden ticket and is going to see Mr. Willie Wonka! Sorry I mean Mr. Lucas,' he said. Rehka said it was the closest any fan would ever come to being a part of the *Star Wars* universe.

"Rehka's other hobbies include restoring old cars and his beautiful 1911 home. He works extra hard to perfect the home's kinks so his family can live comfortably. He would probably say that the 501st is the most rewarding hobby of all.

"Some people may call him a nerd; others may call him a dork. But I call him Dad."

Your one and only daughter,
Autumn



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